

ORGAN & TISSUE DONATIONS

Introduction. Organs and tissues are needed daily to help others live. Donating your body or organs to science or medicine has been called the *greatest gift*, as the thousands of people now on waiting lists to replace failing organs would agree. You can direct your organ donation by completing a donor card (usually witnessed by two people) or when you renew your driver's license. Many state motor vehicle departments have donor cards or contact The Living Bank, <http://www.livingbank.org>. Doctors may also ask your family for consent to organ donation on behalf of a terminally ill patient.

Today, medical advances and technology make successful organ and tissue transplants cheaper, easier, and safer than ever. Commonly donated and transplanted organs and tissues include:

- Corneas
- Hearts and heart valves
- Lungs
- Kidneys
- Skin
- Livers
- Bone and bone marrow
- Tendons, ligaments, and connective tissue
- Pancreases
- Intestines

Whether you donate or not is your personal decision. If you decide to donate you should make a written record to indicate your decision. For example, you would complete these choices:

Upon my death, I wish to donate:

_____ Any needed organs, tissues, or eyes.

_____ Only the following organs, tissues, or eyes: _____

I authorize the use of my organs, tissues, and eyes:

_____ For transplantation

_____ For therapy

_____ For research

_____ For medical education

_____ For any purpose authorized by law.

How do I express my wish to be an organ and tissue donor? The main way is to indicate your intent on a donor card. It identifies you to medical personnel as a potential organ and tissue donor. You can get a donor card or form from most hospitals, or from

any of the foundations that support organ donations, such as the National Kidney Foundation. Another way to do so is to complete the organ/tissue donation page in our Peace of Mind Plan. In many states you may indicate your organ donation desires on your state driver's license.

Learn more:

OrganDonor.gov is one of several web sites that provides information and resources on organ donation and transplantation issues. Created by Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) & Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) OrganDonor.gov also provides links to information on most states' donor programs. DHHS produced this pamphlet: [Organ & Tissue Donation](#) (requires Adobe Acrobat Reader). Also see DHHS' [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

The [Living Bank International](#), a non-profit organization, is dedicated to the enhancement of organ and tissue donation and transplantation. The Living Bank is America's organ and tissue donor registry.

In addition, The Coalition on Donation sponsors ShareYourLife.org. It offers [How to Become a Donor](#) and [Myths & Facts](#) about organ donation. E-mail coalition@shareyourlife.org to request a free donation brochure that has a donor card & family notification form.



Also see, Soldiers Legal Forum: [Planning Your Gift of Life](#) (Soldiers, December 2001, pages 28-29) or our [Legal Services](#) Estate Planning Information Center.